

Message Text

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NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20 OMB-01

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CIEP-02 ACDA-19 DRC-01 /158 W
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FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8815

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

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AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

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USCINCEUR

AMCONSUL BORDEAUX

AMCONSUL LYON

AMCONSUL MARSEILLE

AMCONSUL MARTINIQUE

AMCONSUL NICE

AMCONSUL STRASBOURG

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GENEVA FOR CSCEDL AND DISTO; VIENNA FOR MBFRDEL;

CINCEUR FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PFOR, FR

SUBJECT: FRENCH PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS: WHAT A CHABAN-DELMAS VICTORY WOULD MEAN

1. SUMMARY. AS PRESIDENT OF FRANCE, CHABAN-DELMAS WOULD FOLLOW THE MAIN LINES OF POMPIDOU'S FOREIGN AND DEFENSE POLICIES. HIS DOMESTIC POLICY WOULD DIFFER MAINLY IN THE FIELD OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS. US-FRENCH RELATIONS WOULD NOT UNDERGO ANY MAJOR CHANGE, ALTHOUGH THEY WOULD PROBABLY BE CONDUCTED IN A MORE FRIENDLY FASHION. WE SHOULD NOT EXPECT ANY SUBSTANTIAL CHANGE -- AT LEAST INITIALLY -- IN THE BASIC FRENCH POSTURE OF KEEPING ITS DISTANCE FROM THE US AND ATLANTIC COOPERATION. CHABAN'S OWN INCLINATIONS WOULD PROBABLY PUSH HIM -- OVER THE LONG TERM -- TO MORE FLEXIBLE POSITIONS ON BOTH DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN POLICY ISSUES. HE WOULD ALSO TRY TO CREATE A NEW GOVERNING MAJORITY IN WHICH GAULLIST PARTY INFLUENCE WOULD BE DECREASED. END SUMMARY.

2. CHABAN THE MAN. JUST AS POMPIDOU WAS MORE PRAGMATIC THAN DE GAULLE, CHABAN-DELMAS AS PRESIDENT WOULD BE MORE PRAGMATIC THAN WAS POMPIDOU IN HIS LAST YEARS. DESPITE A RIGHT TREND WHICH THE UDR HAS TAKEN IN RECENT YEARS, CHABAN DOES NOT BELONG TO THE RIGHT WING. HE HAS A GENUINE, HIGHLY-DEVELOPED SOCIAL CONSCIENCE AND CONSIDERS HIS SOCIAL WELFARE ACHIEVEMENTS AS EXEMPLIFIED BY HIS "NEW SOCIETY" PROGRAM BEGUN UNDER HIS PRIME MINISTRY AS HIS GREATEST ACHIEVEMENT. CHABAN NOW PROPOSES A NEW SOCIAL PROGRAM BUILDING ON THE NEW SOCIETY PROGRAM AND GOING BEYOND IT. THIS NEW PROGRAM, WHICH, HOWEVER, HAS YET TO BE DEFINED IN SPECIFIC TERMS, TOGETHER WITH HIS APPEAL TO THE SPIRIT OF GAULLISM AND THE NEED TO FIGHT COMMUNISM, FORMS THE HEART OF HIS PLATFORM. A MAN OF WIDE EXPERIENCE IN BOTH FOURTH AND FIFTH REPUBLIC GOVERNMENTS, CHABAN WOULD PROBABLY FIND IT EASIER TO WORK WITH THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, OF WHICH HE IS A FORMER PRESIDENT, THAN EITHER OF THE OTHER TWO MAJOR CANDIDATES. THE CONFIDENTIAL

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IMPORTANCE OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY SHOULD RISE UNDER CHABAN'S PRESIDENCY. MUCH OF HIS CAREER WAS SPENT IN THE GOVERNMENTS AND ASSEMBLIES OF BOTH THE FOURTH AND FIFTH REPUBLICS (CHABAN WAS ASSEMBLY PRESIDENT FROM 1958 TO 1969, AND HE SERVED IN SEVERAL FOURTH REPUBLIC GOVERNMENTS AS WELL AS BEING PRIME MINISTER UNDER POMPIDOU). HE WOULD NOT OCCUPY DE GAULLE'S OLYMPIAN POSITION FAR ABOVE THE ASSEMBLY. DEPUTIES WOULD NOT BE IN AWE

OF CHABAN AND COULD EXPECT TO BE MORE INTIMATELY INVOLVED
IN THE GOVERNING PROCESS. CHABAN HAS, IN FACT, SAID THAT
HE FAVORS INCREASING THE IMPORTANCE OF THE NATIONAL
ASSEMBLY.

3. DOMESTIC POLICY. CHABAN WOULD ATTEMPT TO DIFFEREN-
TIATE HIS DOMESTIC POLICY FROM THAT OF POMPIDOU IN THE
SOCIAL FIELD. HE HAS A GENUINE CONCERN FOR THE UNDER-
PRIVILEGED IN FRANCE, AND WOULD TRY TO IMPLEMENT HIS
IDEAS ON WORKERS' PARTICIPATION AND ON EXPANDED HEALTH
AND SOCIAL WELFARE PROGRAMS. CHABAN'S ECONOMIC PLATFORM
WILL BE DISCUSSED IN GREATER DETAIL IN SEPTEL. ALTHOUGH
THE COMMUNIST PORTION OF THE LABOR MOVEMENT DOES NOT
LIKE CHABAN-DELMAS, IT WOULD GIVE HIM LESS DIFFICULTY
THAN WOULD GISCARD. HOWEVER, CHABAN WOULD HAVE SOME

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PROBLEMS WITH THE MORE CONSERVATIVE UDR DEPUTIES, WHOM HE NEEDS FOR HIS ASSEMBLY MAJORITY, IF HE GOES TOO FAR OR TOO FAST. CHABAN'S OWN INCLINATION WOULD BE TO TRY TO INCLUDE SOME CENTRIST DEPUTIES, NOW IN THE OPPOSITION, IN HIS PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY AND PERHAPS EVEN IN HIS GOVERNMENT. WHILE HE WOULD PROBABLY NOT APPOINT GISCARD TO HIS GOVERNMENT, AT LEAST NOT INITIALLY, HE WOULD APPOINT OTHER IR LEADERS, SINCE HE NEEDS THE 55 IR VOTES TO ASSURE HIS PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY. CHABAN'S ESTIMATE OF THE LOYALTY AND COHESION OF THE UDR AS A PARTY MUST HAVE BEEN SORELY TRIED BY THE UNEDIFYING SPECTACLE OF INTERIOR MINISTER CHIRAC AND EVEN PRIME MINISTER MESSMER OPENLY TRYING TO BLOCK HIS BID FOR THE PRESIDENCY. TO THE EXTENT THAT THE PARLIAMENTARY SITUATION PERMITS IT, HE WILL PROBABLY TRY TO TRANSFER GAULLIST LOYALTY TO HIMSELF AS THE GENERAL'S HEIR, AND PURGE THE PARTY, IN WHICH HE CAN NO LONGER FEEL GREAT CONFIDENCE. IT IS HARD TO SEE HOW HE COULD HAVE CHIRAC IN HIS GOVERNMENT, ALTHOUGH IN AN EFFORT TO PRESERVE THE ASSEMBLY VOTES OF RIGHT-WING GAULLIST DEPUTIES HE MIGHT INCLUDE OTHERS OF THE GROUP THAT TRIED TO DENY HIM HIS CANDIDACY. CHABAN WOULD BE LIKELY TO TRY AND CREATE A NEW COALITION WITH THE CENTRIST DEPUTIES NOW IN OPPOSITION COMING INTO THE GOVERNING MAJORITY. THE COHESION OF THE CURRENT MAJORITY WOULD BE WEAKENED AS A RESULT OF THE WOUNDS OPENED BY THE GISCARD/CHABAN CONTEST AND THE MACHINATIONS OF CHIRAC AND CO. NEVERTHELESS, CHABAN WOULD CERTAINLY BE ABLE TO COMMAND AN ADEQUATE GOVERNING MAJORITY.

4. US RELATIONS. FRANCO-AMERICAN RELATIONS WOULD NOT

UNDERGO ANY MAJOR CHANGE UNDER CHABAN, AT LEAST NOT INITIALLY. HOWEVER, THEY WOULD PROBABLY BE CONDUCTED IN A FRIENDLIER FASHION. IT IS UNCERTAIN WHETHER OR TO WHAT EXTENT CHABAN WOULD BE PREPARED TO MODERATE FRANCE'S CURRENT STAND ON US-EC CONSULTATIONS. ALTHOUGH HIS OWN INCLINATION WOULD LEAD HIM TO MODERATE THE HARSH TONE, CHARACTERISTIC IN POMPIDOU'S LAST MONTHS, OF FRANCE'S POLICY TOWARD THE US, CHABAN IS UNLIKELY TO GIVE AN IMPROVEMENT IN FRANCO-AMERICAN RELATIONS A HIGH INITIAL PRIORITY. ON THE CONTRARY, CHABAN WOULD BE LIKELY

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TO USE FRENCH FOREIGN POLICY AND ESPECIALLY FRANCO-AMERICAN RELATIONS AS AN EARNEST OF HIS CONTINUED LOYALTY TO DE GAULLE'S PRECEPTS. HE MIGHT, FOR INSTANCE KEEP MICHEL JOBERT AS FOREIGN MINISTER, PARTICULARLY SINCE JOBERT CAME OUT PUBLICLY SUPPORTING CHABAN'S CANDIDACY. CHABAN MIGHT CALCULATE THAT WITH THE POLLS INDICATING THAT TWO-THIRDS OF THE FRENCH PUBLIC APPROVE A CONTINUATION OF POMPIDOU'S FOREIGN POLICY LINE, THERE WOULD BE LITTLE GAINED BY IMPROVING DRAMATICALLY FRANCE'S RELATIONS WITH THE US, WHILE THERE WOULD BE PROBLEMS WITH THE MORE EXTREME UDR DEPUTIES IF HE TRIED TO DO SO. DURING THE CAMPAIGN, CHABAN HAS GIVEN THE IMPRESSION THAT IF ELECTED, HE WOULD TRY TO OVERCOME FRENCH DIFFERENCES WITH THE US. WE SHOULD NOT EXPECT, HOWEVER, ANY CHANGE IN THE BASIC FRENCH POSTURE OF KEEPING ITS DISTANCE FROM THE US AND ATLANTIC COOPERATION, PARTICULARLY SINCE THE STATURE OF BOTH JOBERT AND DEBRE WILL HAVE BEEN STRENGTHENED BY A CHABAN VICTORY. LIKE GISCARD, CHABAN IS LIKELY TO CONTINUE THE RELATIVELY POSITIVE APPROACH TO FOREIGN INVESTMENT WHICH HAS CHARACTERIZED THE ADMINISTRATION OF FRENCH LEGISLATION IN THIS AREA IN THE 1970'S.

5. DEFENSE POLICY. NOTHING IN CHABAN'S RECORD MAKES US BELIEVE THAT ON DEFENSE ISSUES HE WOULD BE MORE HELPFUL TO US INTERESTS THAN WAS POMPIDOU, ALTHOUGH LIKE THE LATTER HE SEES FRENCH SECURITY LINKED FOR FORESEEABLE FUTURE TO US/NATO. HE MIGHT BE PREPARED TO MOVE SLIGHTLY IN THE DIRECTION OF EUROPEAN COOPERATION IN ARMS PROJECTS, BUT ANY CHANGE WOULD BE MINOR. HE WOULD PROBABLY CONTINUE FRENCH DEFENSE EXPENDITURES AT THEIR PRESENT LEVELS. HE WOULD ALSO CONTINUE THE DEVELOPMENT OF FRENCH STRATEGIC NUCLEAR FORCES. THERE IS NO REASON TO BELIEVE THAT CHABAN WOULD BE PREPARED TO SIGN THE LIMITED TEST BAN TREATY OR THE NPT, OR TO JOIN THE GENEVA DISARMAMENT TALKS (CCD) OR MBFR.

6. EUROPEAN RELATIONS. HERE TOO CHABAN WOULD LIKELY

FOLLOW HIS PREDECESSOR'S LINE, WITH PERHAPS SLIGHTLY
MORE FLEXIBILITY. HE DESCRIBED HIMSELF DURING THE
CAMPAIGN AS A MILITANT EUROPEAN WHO AT THE SAME TIME IS
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FULLY IN ACCORD WITH JOBERT. WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT
CHABAN FEELS ANY GREAT ENTHUSIASM FOR THE CONCEPT OF

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EUROPEAN INTEGRATION. HE HAS NEVER INDICATED THAT HE HAS ANY PARTICULARLY ORIGINAL IDEAS ABOUT EUROPEAN UNION. AT THE SAME TIME, HE HAS STRESSED SUCH CONCEPTS AS A FUTURE "EUROPEAN EXECUTIVE" AND AN "AUTONOMOUS EUROPEAN DEFENSE (IN THE DISTANT FUTURE). CHABAN IS FOR SOME FORM OF "EUROPEAN UNION" BUT IS NOT CLEAR WHAT KIND HE MEANS. PRESUMABLY HE SHARES THE THINKING OF POMPIDOU AND JOBERT WHO FAVORED A "CONFEDERAL" EUROPE. CERTAINLY HE WOULD BE AS DETERMINED AS POMPIDOU WAS TO INSURE THAT FRANCE'S NATIONAL INTERESTS AND FRANCE'S POSITION WITHIN THE EC BE PRESERVED.

7. THE LONG-TERM CHABAN. CHABAN'S FIRST PRIORITIES WOULD BE TO CONSTRUCT A WORKABLE GOVERNING MAJORITY, AND TO ATTEMPT TO HEAL THE WOUNDS CAUSED BY THE PRE-ELECTION CAMPAIGN MANEUVERINGS BOTH WITHIN THE UDR AND WITHIN THE PRESENT MAJORITY AS A WHOLE. OVER TIME, HOWEVER, HIS CENTER-LEFT INSTINCTS SHOULD COME TO PLAY AN INCREASING ROLE IN HIS POLICY DECISIONS. CHABAN WILL WISH TO PUSH HIS SOCIAL POLICIES, AND TO MODERATE THE DELIBERATELY AGGRESSIVE ASPECTS OF GAULLIST FOREIGN POLICY. HE COULD ALSO MOVE SOME DISTANCE TOWARD GREATER COOPERATION BETWEEN THE US AND EUROPE. IN LEANING AWAY FROM GAULLIST PRINCIPLES, CHABAN WOULD PRESUMABLY BE INFLUENCED BY WHAT HE MUST SEE AS THE ACCELERATING DECLINE OF THE UDR FROM A MASS MOVEMENT AROUND THE GENERAL THROUGH A SMALLER MOVEMENT DEDICATED TO HIS MEMORY AND CONTROLLED, INITIALLY, BY THE MORE PRAGMATIC POMPIDOU TO A SMALL RIGHT-WING CONSERVATIVE PARTY. THE CENTRIST ELEMENTS IN THE UDR WILL MOVE TO JOIN OTHER CENTRIST PARTIES AND CHABAN WOULD FIND IN THEM THE NUCLEUS OF HIS OWN MAJORITY. THUS, EVEN IF THE GAULLIST CHABAN WERE TO WIN THE FRENCH PRESIDENCY, THE GAULLIST PERIOD IN FRANCE IS OVER.
IRWIN

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